INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING

1. Take an inventory of course goals.

subject matter goals: essential concepts and knowledge

thinking skills goals: processes of inquiry, critical reading, analysis, and argument in the discipline

other goals: personal growth, deepening of self, other mission-related goals

2. Design critical thinking problems that focus on these goals.

problems should engage students as persons, thinkers, and problem-solvers

problems should focus on course subject matter and help students learn disciplinary ways of thinking, analyzing, and arguing

problems should encourage students to question assumptions and to explore alternative ways of thinking and acting

problems should be geared to the developmental level of the students

3. Develop a repertoire of ways to give critical thinking problems to students

as short "one-pager" writing assignments

as longer, formal writing assignments

as thought provokers for exploratory writing (journal entries, reading logs, in-class freewrites)

as tasks for small-group problem solving

as opening questions for a whole-class discussion

as opening questions for Socratic "cold-calling"

as questions for an in-class debate, panel discussion, or fishbowl

as essay exam questions or practice exam questions

4. Develop strategies to include exploratory writing and talking in your courses

journals, thought letters, in-class freewrite, e-mail exchanges, exploratory writing attached to final drafts

class discussions, debates, small-group problem solving

5. When assigning formal writing, treat writing as a process

problem-posing, exploration, research, note-taking, journal writing, talking with colleagues

drafting

substantial revision reflecting increased complexity and elaboration of thought and increased awareness of readers' needs

editing

6. Develop effective strategies for coaching students in critical thinking

critiquing solutions developed by small groups

modeling critical thinking in process-oriented lectures in which you show how you (or others) thought through a problem

Asking provocative questions and guiding discussions

writing revision-oriented comments on student papers

discussing strengths and weaknesses of sample student papers

stressing revision and multiple drafts of formal writing

organizing and presenting course material to highlight problems and controversies and provoke student questioning

using questioning strategies to draw students gradually from lower order to higher order reasoning